



Colchester Eye Centre
Colchester Primary Care Centre
Tel: 07780 005814
Monday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm



**East Suffolk and
North Essex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Conjunctivitis

What is conjunctivitis?

Conjunctivitis is an infection of the conjunctiva (the 'skin' which covers the white part of the eye. It is a very common infection of the eye which is easily caught and passed on by others. In most cases it will clear up on its own in 7–10 days.

There are several causes of conjunctivitis, but in most cases it is caused by common bacteria, and by viruses which also cause the common cold.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Eyelids may be puffy.
- The white part of the eye will be red.
- Gritty, sore eyes.
- Discharge which may be watery or sticky (depending on the cause), making the eyes sticky in the mornings.
- Light sensitivity.
- You may feel generally unwell and have cold-like symptoms/sore throat.
- Usually affects both eyes, but starts in one eye first then involves the other eye a few days later.



How did I catch it?

- Close personal contact.
- Someone coughing or sneezing near to you.
- Sharing towels, flannels or pillow-cases with someone already infected.
- Touching an object or shaking hands with someone who is infected and has not washed their hands.

What is the treatment?

Bacterial conjunctivitis is easily treated with antibiotic drops or ointment.

There is no treatment for viral conjunctivitis, it will not respond to antibiotic treatment; the virus has to run its course and can last for several weeks. You may be prescribed antibiotic drops or ointment to prevent you getting a secondary infection.

Conjunctivitis is infectious so:

- Wash your hands before and after touching your eyes or after instilling drops/ointment.
- Do not share towels, flannels, pillow-cases and so on.
- Use tissues if you need to wipe your eyes, use once only then throw away.
- Do not allow anyone else to use your eye drops/ointment and throw them away once your treatment is finished.

For advice out of hours

Weekdays 5 pm–7 pm and weekends and bank holidays, 11 am–4 pm, please telephone **01206 286882**, or contact your GP, or go to a walk-in centre or the nearest accident and emergency department.

Please ask if you
need this leaflet in an
alternative format.